
Decisions of the Second Annual Convention. [Aug. 22, 1922]

Published in *The Communist* [New York: unified CPA], v. 1, no. 10 (Aug.-Sept. 1922), pp. 3-5.
The 2nd Convention of the unified CPA was held near Bridgman, Michigan, Aug. 17-22, 1922.

I. Position of the Trade Unions.

1. The work in the trade unions must be increased tenfold. Every member of the Party must not only be a member of a trade union, but it at all possible must become a leader in these organizations. It is not only a question of the life and death of the Party, but it is also the best means to overcome the sterile inner struggles of the Party and to concentrate the interests of the membership on the great questions of the struggle of the American proletariat.

2. The road to the American revolution leads over the defeat and elimination of the power of the reactionary bureaucracy which now dominates the largest group of organizations of the working class in this country, the American Federation of Labor. Therefore the most important labor union work is the work within the AF of L. To save this group of organizations from the influence of its present dominantly corrupt leadership and to win it for the open and straightforward class struggle is the task. The chief slogan in this work is, amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions.

3. The main goal of the Communists in their trade union work is the unification of all organized labor into one federation.

4. The work in the independent unions must be carried on in the above spirit. The necessary and ripe amalgamations (not artificial ones) of independent unions within a certain industry or in

local councils, should be influenced by the Communists so that they are not carried through in a separatist spirit against the AF of L, but as a step toward the general unification of labor, and in support of the work within the AF of L.

5. The tendency for the formation of a national federation of independent unions or the amalgamation of local councils into a competing federation against the American Federation of Labor, is harmful.

6. Affiliation of independent unions to the Red International of Labor Unions must be propagated. But such affiliation must be effected in a way that will not increase the difficulty of our work within the American Federation of Labor.

II. Relation of the CP to LPP.

1. According to the Theses on the Role of the Communist Party adopted at the 2nd World Congress [of the Comintern, July 19-Aug. 7, 1920], the main task of the Communist is:

2. In the effort to awaken and strengthen class consciousness among the working masses, to develop, sharpen, and lead the class struggle, to win the sympathies of the great majority of the working class for Communism, and to establish their confidence in the Communist Party and thus to prepare for the final battle with capitalist rule — in this effort the Communist Party works openly and publicly. Whether a Communist Party operates “legally,” that is, whether it is tolerated

by the enemy capitalist state, or whether it is forced to be “illegal” and to keep its whole apparatus of organization secret, depends upon a number of conditions which vary in different countries and at different times; but it depends first of all upon the relative power of the struggling working class on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state on the other. But also in those countries where the Communist Party is legal, it is forced to break the legality, that is, to break the laws established by the enemy capitalist state, just as the state itself tramples its own laws under foot whenever necessary to do violence to the working class. In most countries, and in the most important ones of the capitalist world, the Communist Parties are at present open, that is “legal,” parties. Not so in the United States. Here the Communist Party cannot, as in France, Germany, Italy, England, Czecho-Slovakia, etc., be a “legal” party; but it must carry on its work as an underground organization like the Communist Parties in Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania. If a party is forced to work temporarily underground, then it can fight for an open existence only by widening its influence, by increasing its power, by winning the sympathies of the broad masses of the workers, and thus forcing the enemy to recognize it.

3. The illegal Communist Party of America has no prospects in the near future of becoming a legal party, and therefore the underground Party is and remains the only Section of the Communist International in the United States. Should conditions change, and should the Communist Party of America become an open, “legal,” party, even then it will, like the other legal Communist Parties, need an underground apparatus for special purposes.

4. But whether the Party is legal or illegal, the center of gravity of the activities of the Communist Party of America is in the open work, in connection with the broad masses and their struggles. For this purpose it must exploit all legal

possibilities for propaganda and agitation to the fullest possible extent. Especially does this apply to the activities within the trades unions and in the political field, the LPP [Legal Political Party].

5. The whole work of the LPP must be directed by the Communist Party, to which purpose the following rules apply:

(a) All members of the CP must be members of the LPP. In their work in the LPP they are subject to the discipline of the CP.

(b) The CEC of the CP must direct the whole work of the LPP in accordance with the decisions of the conventions of the CP, especially the work of the leading bodies of the LPP. All basic actions of the LPP must be prepared by the CEC of the CP. The Convention of the LPP must be preceded by a Convention of the CP.

(c) The meetings of the organizations of the Communist Party must devote their time, along with the routine work of the Party, mainly to the consideration of the open work, especially that in the LPP. By this method these meetings must be made live actions. No duplication of work with the LPP must be done, but the best methods of carrying out the directions of the party must be prepared.

(d) The legal press must be exploited to the fullest extent for Communist propaganda and agitation.

(e) The Official Organ of the Communist Party, published regularly, should be devoted to the discussion of tactical and organizational questions of the CP and of the Communist International, as well as comprising the entire membership of the CP.

(f) Illegal leaflets must be published only if all legal possibilities are exhausted or if special reasons make it advisable.

III. Program of the LPP.

The program must be short. It must be a manifesto which in concise form — not in the

form of narrative or syllogism — contains our program. The red thread of this document must be the class struggle, leading up to the climax of the proletarian dictatorship. The document must be American. The proletarian dictatorship must be shown as the rule of the 38 million wage workers as against the dictatorship of Wall Street. American democracy must be analyzed.

The dictatorship of the working class through Soviets must be shown as the historic form in which the victory of the working class has up to the present time manifested itself.

The necessity of an international organization of the advance guard of the working class of the world must be shown, and the Communist International must be acknowledged to be the leader of this advance guard.

IV. Opposition.

It is possible and desirable to bring about full Communist unity by bringing back into the Party the Opposition [Central Caucus faction], on the basis of the decisions of the CI. In carrying out this reuniting, the decision about recruiting groups shall not be applied, but rather better-fitting forms must be found for the organizational assimilation of returning members of the Opposition. All measures shall be taken in agreement with the representative of the Communist International.

V. Discussions in the Party.

1. On special occasions the Central Executive Committee decides whether a controversial question should be submitted to the discussion of the Party. Such a decision represents a political act of the Party. It must be accompanied by an indication as to the form and scope of the discussion (whether a discussion in the press is included). Material, pro and con, must be submitted in condensed form.

2. Discussions of controversial questions may be accompanied by a simultaneous discussion in the Party press, or they may not, just as the CEC decides. Under no consideration can an editor take the initiative to open discussion in any Party paper on any controversial question in the Party. This applies to all papers under control of the Party.

3. After the CEC or any other Party unit has reached a decision about an action, all subordinate organizations of the Party and the membership must be confined to the best means of carrying out the decision. If organizations or members of the Party have doubt as to the wisdom of the decisions, they must convey such doubts to the CEC. But under no consideration must the carrying out of such decisions be delayed thereby, or sabotaged. Neither is it permissible for groups or organizations of the membership to try to reach an understanding about resistance to decisions of the Party.

4. Two months, or at the very latest, 6 weeks before the Party Convention, the Central Executive Committee notifies the Party units about the agenda and submits the points of the agenda to discussion of the membership. The agenda must be accompanied by an outline of the forthcoming report to the Convention about the activity of the Party in the past year, and this must include a report about the existing situation and a plan of action for the coming year.

VI. Caucuses.

According to the explicit declarations of the 3rd World Congress of the Communist International [June 22-July 12, 1921], the formation of caucuses within the Party is formally forbidden. A caucus is a formal organization of a part of the membership of the Party with its own solidarity and discipline. But there can be no Party discipline if there is caucus discipline, or if there is any conception of “betrayal” of a caucus. There is such a thing as a betrayal of Communism, betrayal of

the Communist International, or of the Party — but the concept of betrayal of a caucus within the Party cannot be tolerated. Every attempt to build or to rebuild or continue a caucus within the Party must be met with decisive disciplinary measures.

VII. Liquidation.

1. The Communist Party of America must continue to exist as an underground party.
2. Its main task consists in the open work, especially through the LPP and the trade unions.
3. Should conditions change and the possibility of an open Communist Party arise, then a convention of the Communist Party alone can decide.

VIII. Party Council.

1. A Party Council will be formed. The Party Council consists of the Central Executive Committee members and of one Party Council member from each Party District or from a combination of Districts as designated by the Convention.
2. The delegate to the Party Council from each District, and their alternates, are elected by the Convention. When vacancies in the Party Council occur, after the list of alternates is exhausted, the DEC fills the vacancy for its District.
3. Editors of the party papers and the Federation Secretaries participate in the sessions of the Party Council with voice but not vote.
4. The Party Council meets upon call of the Central Executive Committee every four months and upon special occasions. The Party Council decides upon a plan of action for the coming months.
5. The decisions of the Party Council are in

force only if ratified by the Central Executive Committee — except as provided for in paragraph 6 of this Article. The Central Executive Committee bears sole responsibility before the Convention.

6. Expulsions from the Party decided upon by the Central Executive Committee are in full force immediately but are subject to final ratification by the Party Council.

IX. Composition of the Central Executive Committee.

According to the Thesis on Organization of Communist Parties adopted by the 3rd World Congress of the Communist International [June 22-July 12, 1921], the majority of the Central Executive Committee must reflect the majority of the Party Convention. But also the minority of the Party Convention must be reflected by a minority representation in the Central Executive Committee. The whole Central Executive Committee must be so constituted that the comrades most competent in the different forms of Party work are elected. Not every good caucus leader is a good Party leader. Every member of the CEC, whether coming from a majority or a minority of the Convention, shall represent in the CEC the general interest of the Party. Not only is it not permissible for members of the CEC to form caucuses in the Party for their support, but every CEC member is personally responsible that his partisans and former caucus friends do not undertake or support the formation of factions. The main task of the new CEC is to reestablish the endangered Party unity, and to build up again the weakened confidence of the Party, without which fruitful Party activity is impossible.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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